

Book Reviews

W. STERLING EDWARDS and PETER D. EDWARDS, *Alexis Carrel. Visionary surgeon*, Springfield, Ill., Charles C Thomas, 1974, 8vo, pp. xi, 143, illus., \$5.00.

Alexis Carrel (1873–1944) was an outstanding French-born surgeon who spent most of his professional life at the Rockefeller Institute, New York City (1903–1939). He received a Nobel Prize in 1912 and his main contributions were to vascular surgery, the care of wounds, and to tissue culture. His particular claim to fame stems from the pioneer work he did in evolving techniques of arterial suture, blood vessel grafts, and organ transplantation.

But as well as being a most gifted scientist whose experimental work was characterized by precision and care, Carrel believed in miracle cures after having observed what he believed to have been one at Lourdes in 1903. Later in life he became a mystic and evolved odd ideas and religious fervour. In World War II he was accused of having pro-fascist associations and he died in disgrace, accused of collaboration with the Germans, although this has never been proved.

Dr. Edwards, a vascular surgeon, and his son present the first substantial biography of Carrel in English. It is well written and well documented and provides a useful source of information concerning a remarkable man.

ROBERT REID, *Marie Curie*, London, Collins, 1974, 8vo, pp. 349, illus., £4.50.

The author, who was head of BBC-TV Science and Features Department from 1970 to 1973, has chosen to present as accurate as possible a picture of Marie Curie, and to avoid the glamour and distortion that have crept into previous biographies. His objective account is based on both the familiar and the more obscure sources, found in private papers and contemporary newspapers, and the result is an excellent book, highly recommendable. It is written in a lively and readable style, but with limited documentation.

Mr. Reid's scientific background allows him to give an excellent survey of Madame Curie's work, as well as of the scientific climate of her times. Her remarkable achievements, for which she had the unique reward of two Nobel Prizes for science, initiated a new era of nuclear physics. He also deals sympathetically and understandingly with her ability to surmount all but the last, aplastic anaemia due to immoderate exposure to the very substance she had discovered and which killed her when sixty-six years of age.